



Lawyer Satisfaction Survey

Redefining Success for the
Modern Attorney

June 2024

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Background

Law360 Pulse's Lawyer Satisfaction Survey focuses on how attorneys feel about their jobs. Are attorneys satisfied with their work? What would make them more satisfied? Compensation, work hours, firm culture and common misconceptions all have a role to play in attorneys' stress levels and overall satisfaction. The Lawyer Satisfaction Survey is part of a series of surveys that aim to expand the data-driven insights available as part of Law360 Pulse, a news service focused on the business of law.

Methodology

Law360 Pulse conducted the Lawyer Satisfaction Survey from Feb. 20 to Apr. 22, 2024. The survey received 1,247 responses from U.S.-based attorneys, of whom 429 were associates, 166 were nonequity partners, 427 were equity partners, 121 were of counsel, and 104 were staff attorneys or other law firm attorneys. Among participants, 39% were women and 58% were men, with less than 1% either nonbinary or other gender and 2% preferring not to disclose their gender. Some percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding, while other percentages may exceed 100 because respondents were allowed to select multiple answers. The survey was anonymous and will not connect any individual response with any person.

Introduction

By **Sam Bell, Jack Collens**
and **Pamela Wilkinson**
Law360 Pulse

Law firms seem to be providing value to their employees, with roughly two-thirds of the respondents in the 2024 edition of our annual Lawyer Satisfaction survey saying they're satisfied with their jobs. One outstanding benefit is the pay; just over half rated their current financial stability as excellent.

More than half of all survey respondents reported being satisfied with their compensation, their firm's billable hours requirement, the opportunities for advancement and the collegiality and collaborative nature of their firm. And many are happy enough to stay put: two-thirds said they were either unlikely or very unlikely to look for a job at another firm within the next year.

However, there are signs of difficulty among U.S. lawyers. Among all respondents, more than a third say they feel stressed most or all of the time. That number climbs to nearly half for associates and women, calling into question the effectiveness of recent changes — such as the rise of hybrid work environments — to the highly demanding legal profession. Attorneys are still overworked, as just under half of attorneys reported working

more than 50 hours per week, with a majority taking two weeks or less of vacation time.

There have been improvements in some areas. The share of female lawyers who reported experiencing gender discrimination decreased in this year's survey, despite similarities across most other measures of discrimination from year to year. More than three-quarters of all respondents reported never having experienced any sort of discrimination in the workplace.

Another improvement has been the post-pandemic tolerance of at least part-time remote work among law firms. A substantial majority of respondents said their firms were at least somewhat flexible with remote work, not requiring them to be in the office full-time. In fact, nearly half said their firms were very flexible, allowing them to work remotely with few limitations.

This transition may have been aided at least in part by technology, including AI. Most attorneys were satisfied with their firms' investments in these areas, though the portion is slightly smaller this year than last. This year's survey added AI explicitly to the question — a topic that tends to generate mixed feelings, and may explain the decline in satisfaction with firms' technological commitments.

1. The Most Desirable Firms

For the third year in a row, Latham & Watkins LLP was chosen as the most desirable firm, followed by Kirkland & Ellis LLP and Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, who swapped places from a year ago. Outside the top three, however, most of the top 10 in this year's survey are rated the highest they've ever been in our Satisfaction Survey.

Only WilmerHale and Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP have appeared in

the top 10 before, both in 2023's ranking.

Of the top 25 firms, Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz is the smallest at just over 250 attorneys, suggesting that BigLaw still appears to be the preferred destination for attorneys. This is impressive, given BigLaw's reputation for demanding schedules and lack of work-life balance, both of which were mentioned in more than half of the survey's open-ended comments.

RANK	FIRM	MENTIONS
1	Latham	43
2	Kirkland	23
3	Gibson Dunn	20
4	Paul Weiss	19
5	DLA Piper	17
6	O'Melveny	15
6	Sidley	15
8	Cravath	14
8	Quinn Emanuel	14
8	WilmerHale	14
11	Morgan Lewis	13
11	Morrison Foerster	13
11	Skadden	13
14	Davis Polk	12

RANK	FIRM	MENTIONS
14	Jones Day	12
16	Covington	11
17	Cooley	10
17	Holland & Knight	10
17	McDermott	10
20	Fish & Richardson	9
20	Wilson Sonsini	9
22	Littler	8
22	Milbank	8
22	Orrick	8
22	Perkins Coie	8
22	Ropes & Gray	8
22	Simpson Thacher	8
22	Wachtell	8

2. Year-Over-Year Changes

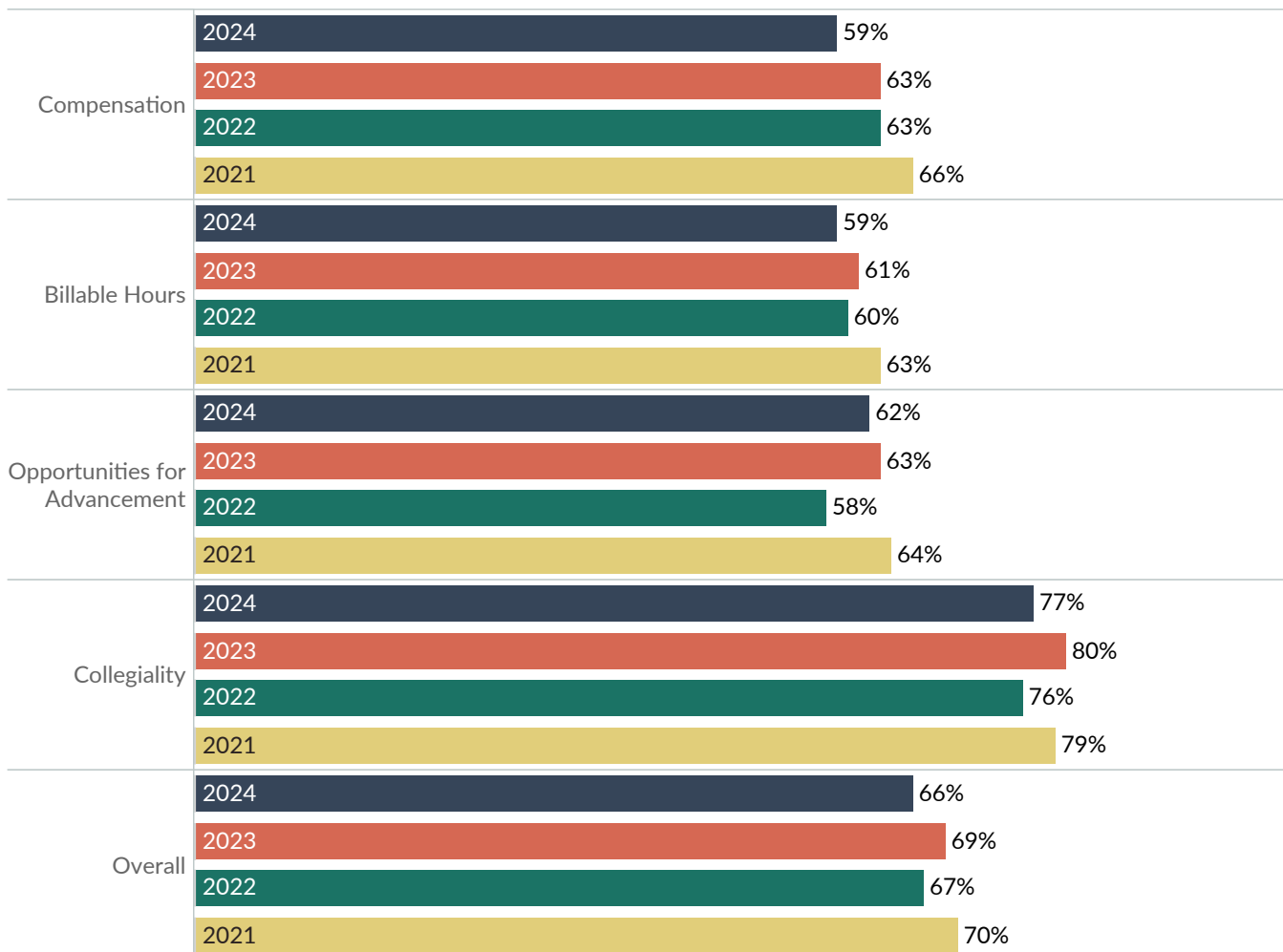
This is the fourth year Law360 Pulse has asked law firm attorneys about their job satisfaction. Since the first year of the survey – 2021 – the legal industry has seen remarkable changes, from the COVID-19 pandemic through to the landscape-altering advent of artificial intelligence tools.

Lawyers have generally reported being satisfied with most aspects of their jobs, with the majority saying they were satisfied

or very satisfied with their compensation, billable hours requirements, opportunities for advancement, workplace collegiality and overall jobs.

The only trend may be a slight downtick in satisfaction with compensation, from a high of 66% in 2021 to 59% in 2024. General job satisfaction has declined only slightly in the same period, from 70% to 66%. All other satisfaction indicators were fairly stable.

Percentage of respondents who say they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'

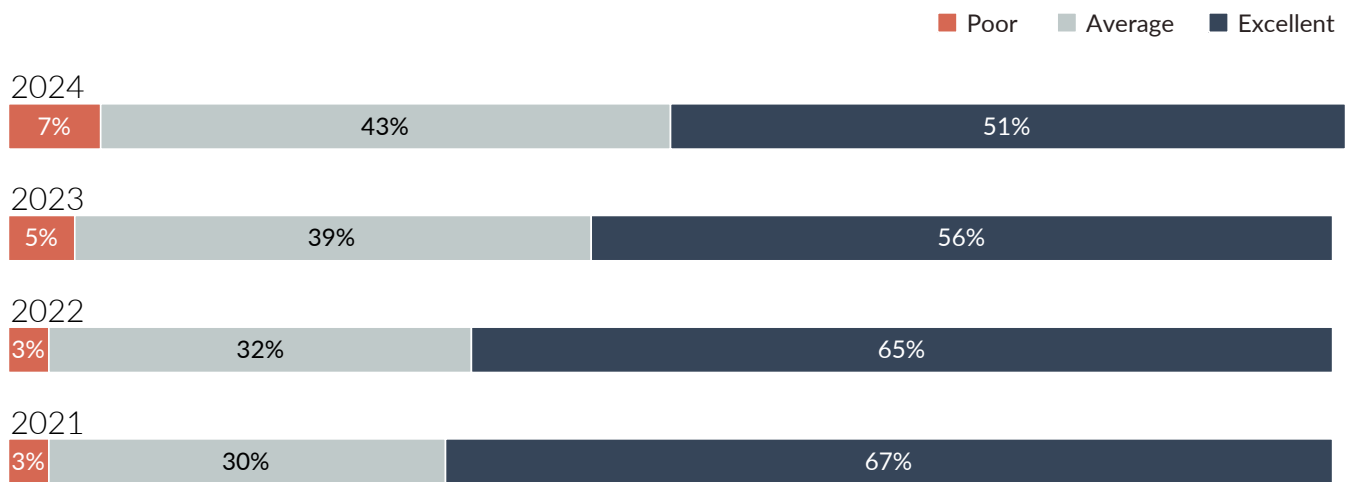


Attorneys remained most satisfied with the collegiality and collaborative nature of their firms, with over three-quarters reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied with that aspect of their workplace in each of the survey's four years.

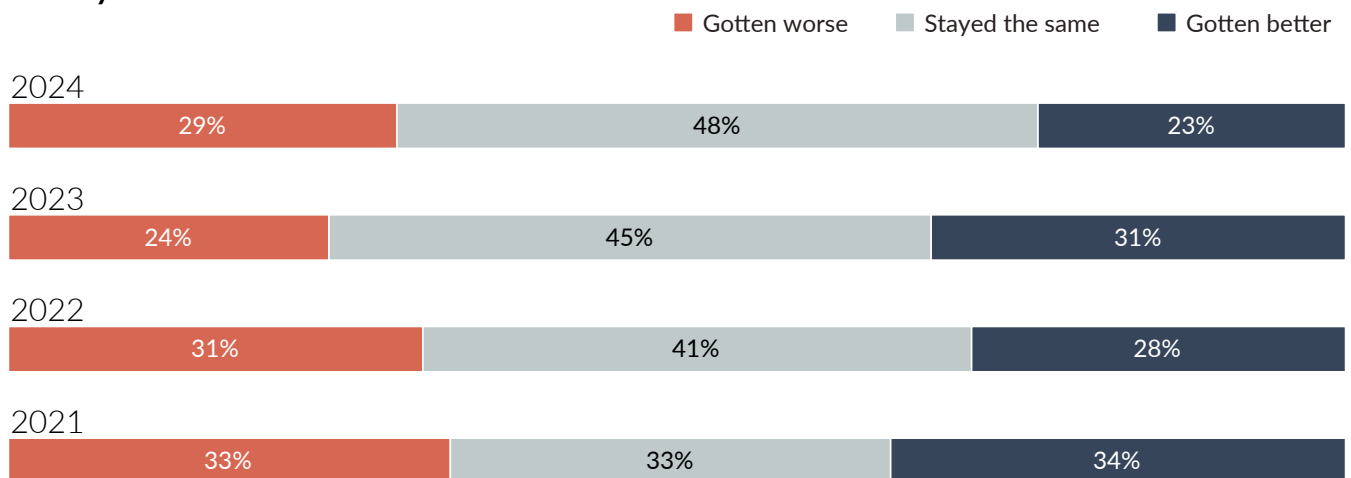
Declining satisfaction with compensation is also reflected in the changing share of

attorneys reporting "excellent" financial stability, from 67% in 2021 to 51% in 2024. Satisfaction is deeper than compensation, of course. Attorneys also reported somewhat lower levels of work-life balance than in 2023, with only 23% in 2024 saying their work-life balance has gotten better over the past year, and 29% saying it had gotten worse.

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?



Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, gotten worse or stayed the same?



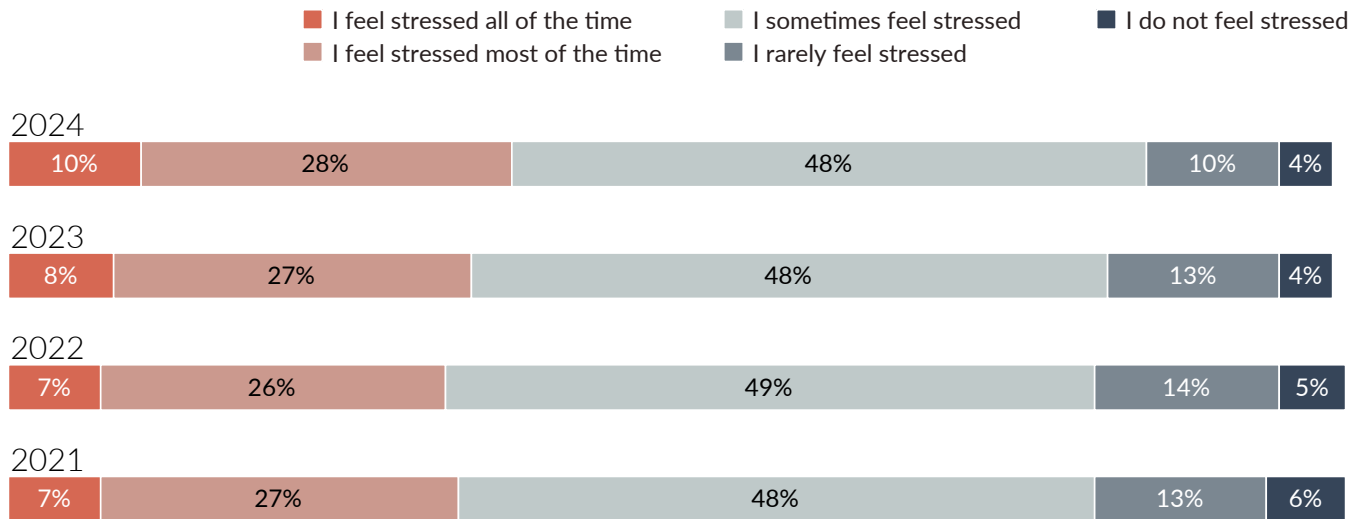
Further evidence of pressure on attorneys can be found in their stress levels. Since 2021, roughly one third of attorneys said they feel stressed most or all of the time. In 2024, that number climbed to 38%.

Additionally, there has been a clear decline in the share of attorneys experiencing workplace discrimination, with more than three-quarters of attorneys in 2024 responding that they have experienced neither sexual harassment nor discrimination on the basis of race, gender

or age, up from 65% in 2021. Despite this, however, fewer attorneys agree — strongly or otherwise — that their workplace is committed to diversity and inclusion. In 2021, 77% agreed, while in 2024 that number had dropped 10 percentage points to 67%.

One of the most consistent findings year over year is that over 70% of attorneys would choose the same career path if given another opportunity, suggesting the continued desirability of the legal profession.

How stressed do you feel?



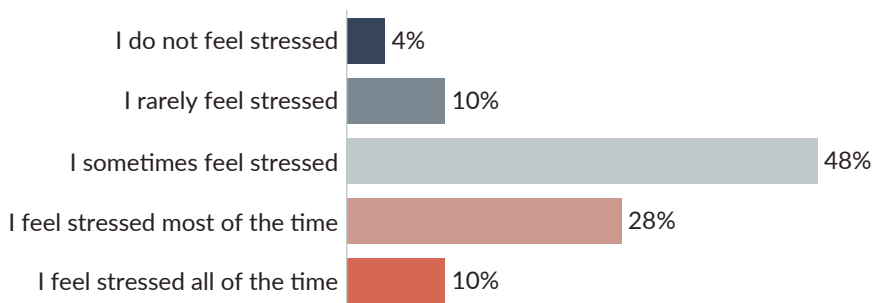
3. Stress and Balance

The legal industry’s reputation as a demanding, time-consuming endeavor appears to be strong as ever, with attorneys reporting high workloads, substantial amounts of stress and few outlets for relief for the most junior attorneys.

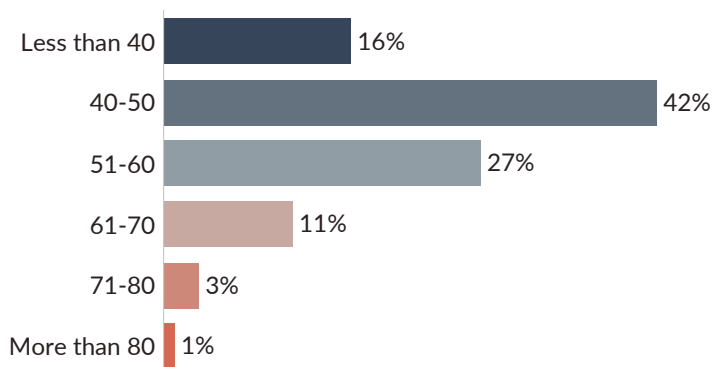
Overall, more than 38% of respondents

reported feeling stressed at least most of the time, with only 4% reporting not feeling stressed at all and 10% rarely feeling stressed. Stress levels are clearly related to work hours, as 56% of those working more than 50 hours per week feel stressed most or all of the time, compared to only a quarter of those working 50 hours per week or less.

How stressed do you feel?



How many hours a week do you work, on average?

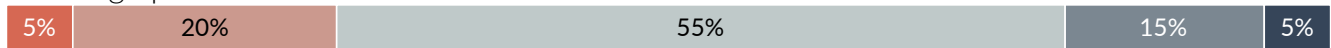




How stressed do you feel?

- I feel stressed all of the time
- I sometimes feel stressed
- I do not feel stressed
- I feel stressed most of the time
- I rarely feel stressed

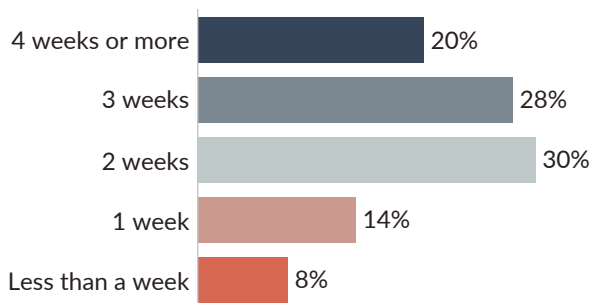
Working up to 50 hours a week



Working more than 50 hours a week



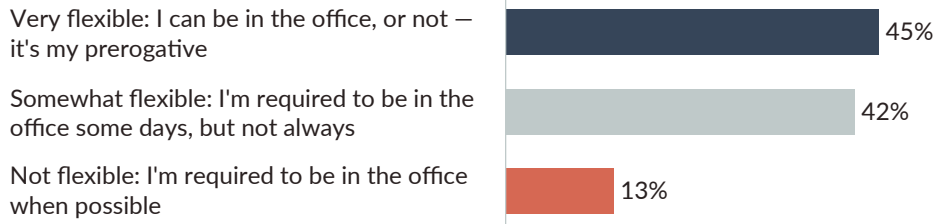
How much vacation time do you expect to take overall in 2024?



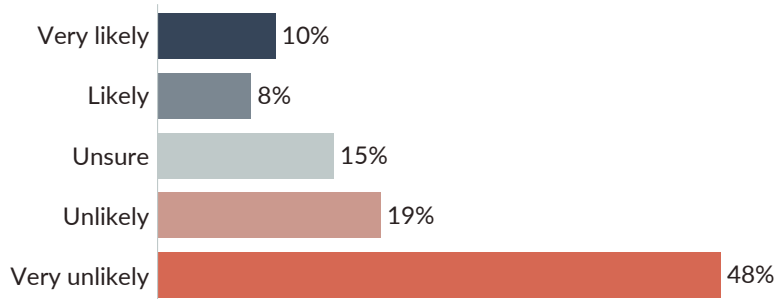
Moreover, attorneys are finding decent opportunities to work from home. Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed said their firms were at least somewhat flexible with remote work, suggesting that chances for finding some work-life balance in the notoriously demanding legal industry may be improving.

Despite any misgivings, however, respondents overwhelmingly said they would become lawyers again if given a second chance. And only 18% said they were likely or very likely to look for a job with another firm in the next year, with more than 67% saying they were unlikely or very unlikely to do so.

How flexible is your firm with working remotely?



How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?



If you could do it all over, would you still become a lawyer?



4. Satisfaction and Seniority

Two of the most pervasive perceptions of the legal industry are the long hours required and rich financial rewards. A breakdown by position shows a rise in satisfaction as attorneys advance in seniority, with equity partners far and away the happiest with their firms and jobs. Respondents were pretty satisfied with their workplaces, regardless of their position within the firm. But while associates were, predictably, the least content on several fronts, nonequity partners stood out for being the most lukewarm. They were less content than associates with their compensation, and otherwise, fell well below their equity counterparts in their satisfaction with other areas.

Associates were more likely than their more senior colleagues to say their work-life balance has gotten worse in the last year — 38% said so, compared to 31% of nonequity partners and 22% of equity partners. They were also the least inclined to say their firms were very considerate of family obligations and the least likely to be satisfied with firms' billable hour requirements.

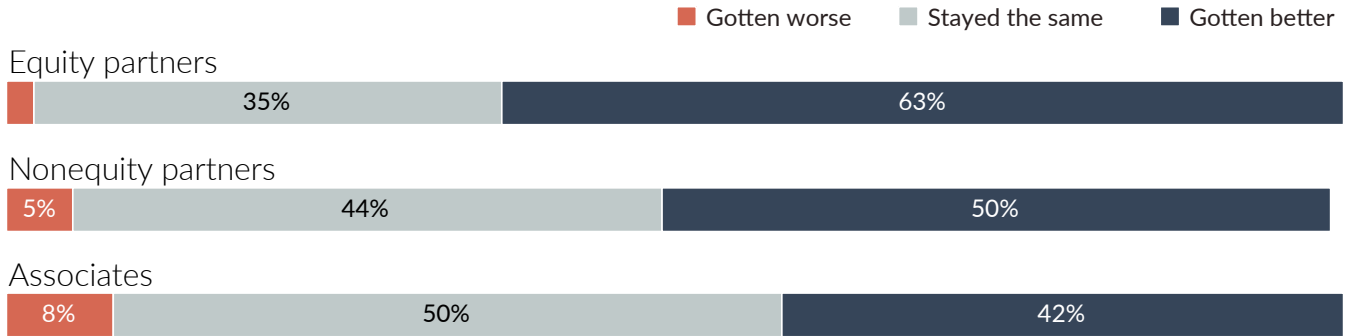
But the rewards were clear for this group, even at the bottom of the ladder. Nearly two-thirds of associates are still carrying student loan debt. Nevertheless, 58% are satisfied or very satisfied with their

compensation, and 42% said their financial stability was excellent — a hefty portion for professionals who are just starting out.

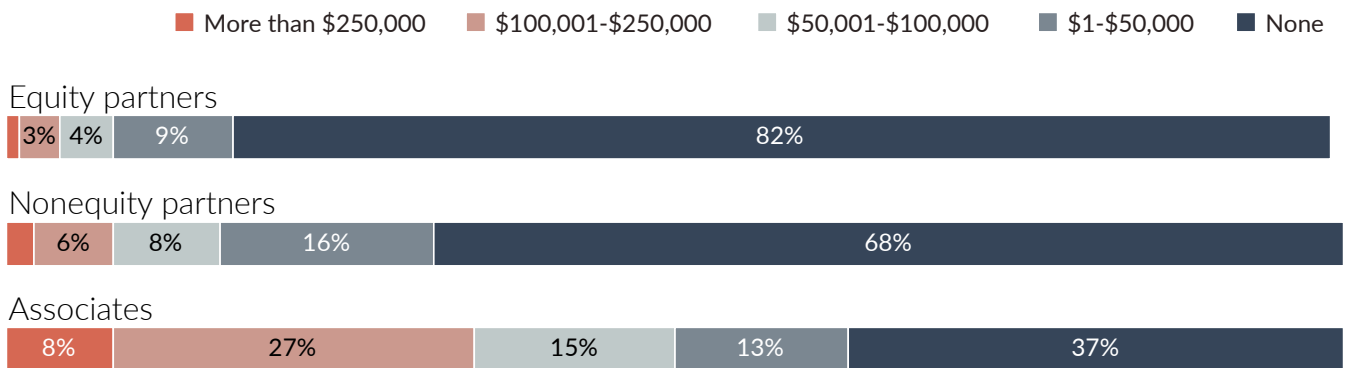
Financial benefits notwithstanding, more than a quarter of associates — 27% — reported being likely or very likely to look for another job within the next year. Twenty-two percent were dissatisfied with the opportunities for advancement at their firms, suggesting that if firms want to do more to retain talent at that level, they might look to providing more support on the job.

If there is a weak spot in contentment with the profession, it is less with attorneys at the outset than with those who are mid-career. Nonequity partners were the least content with their compensation, with only a bit more than half — 54% — registering some degree of satisfaction, compared to 58% of associates and 67% of equity partners. They were only slightly more likely than associates, and much less likely than equity partners, to be satisfied with opportunities for advancement: 56% of nonequity partners were satisfied or very satisfied in that area, compared with 54% of associates and 79% of equity partners. Perhaps most tellingly, nonequity partners were the least inclined to say they would become lawyers if given a do-over, making their views of the profession the least optimistic.

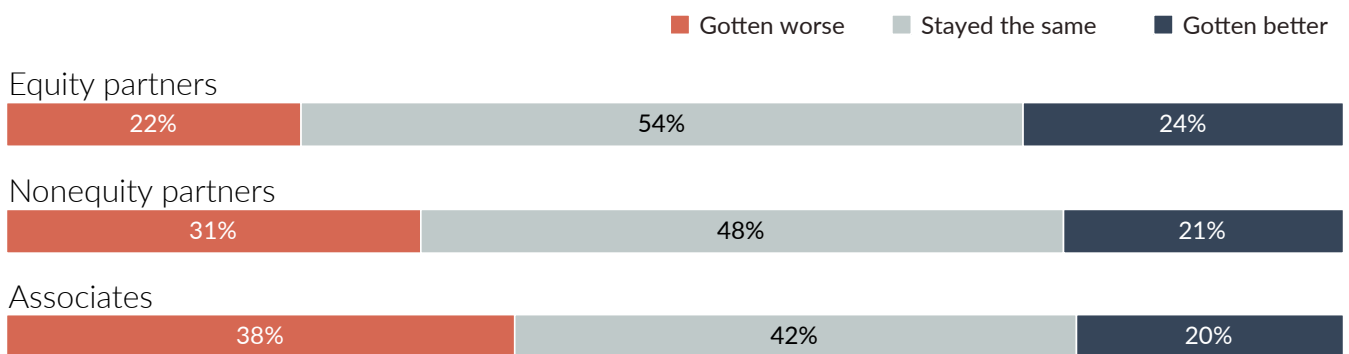
Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?



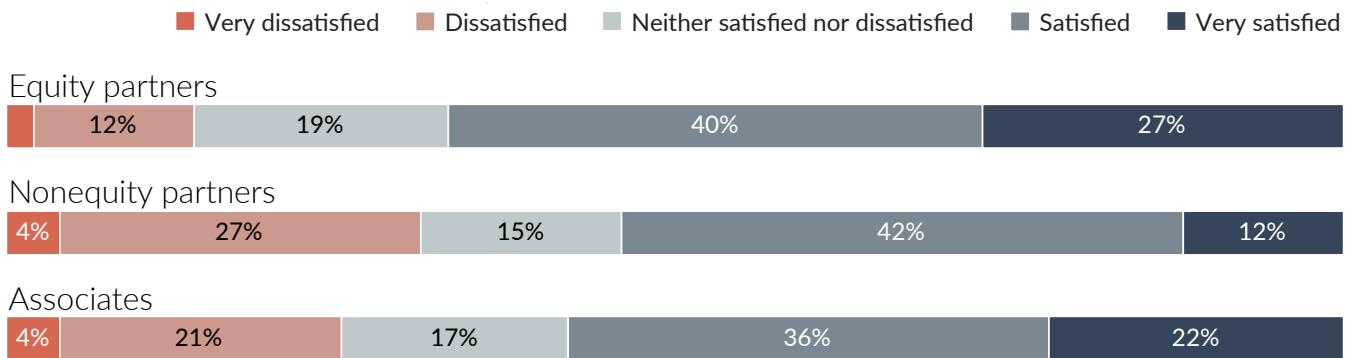
How much student loan debt do you have?



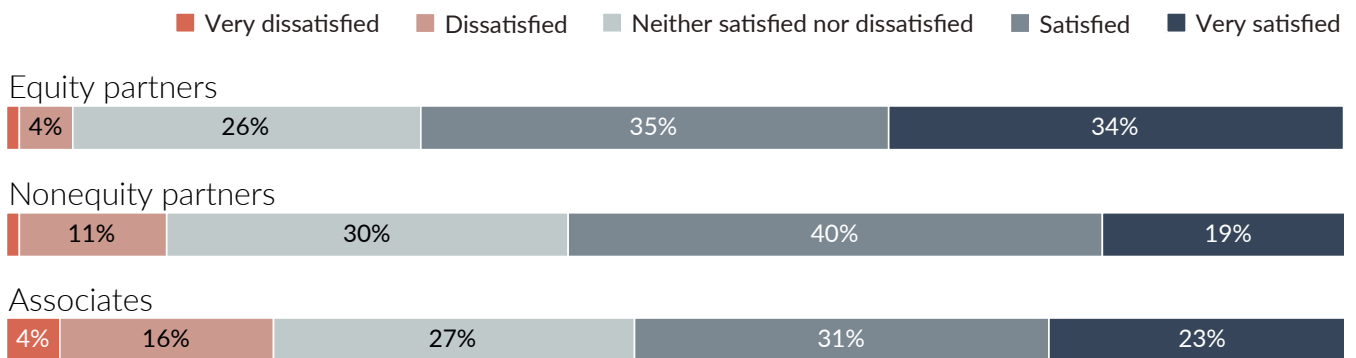
Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, gotten worse or stayed the same?



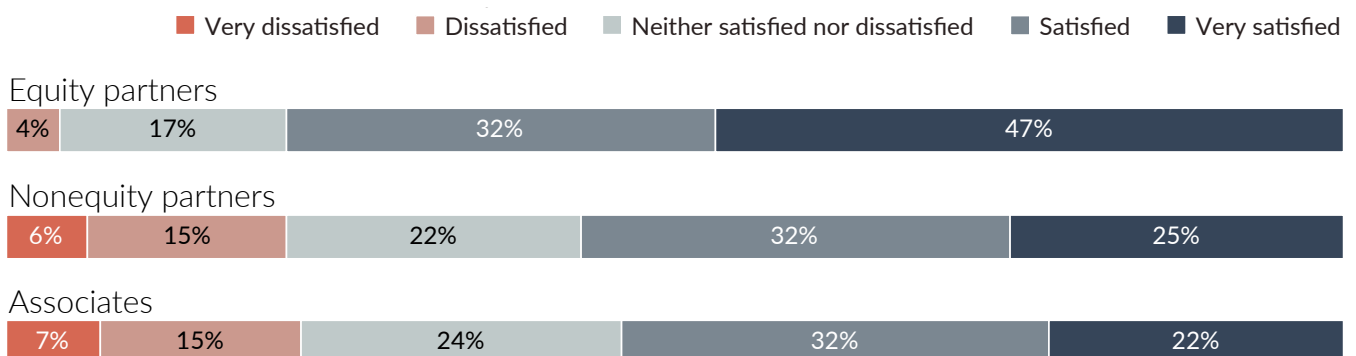
How satisfied are you with your compensation?



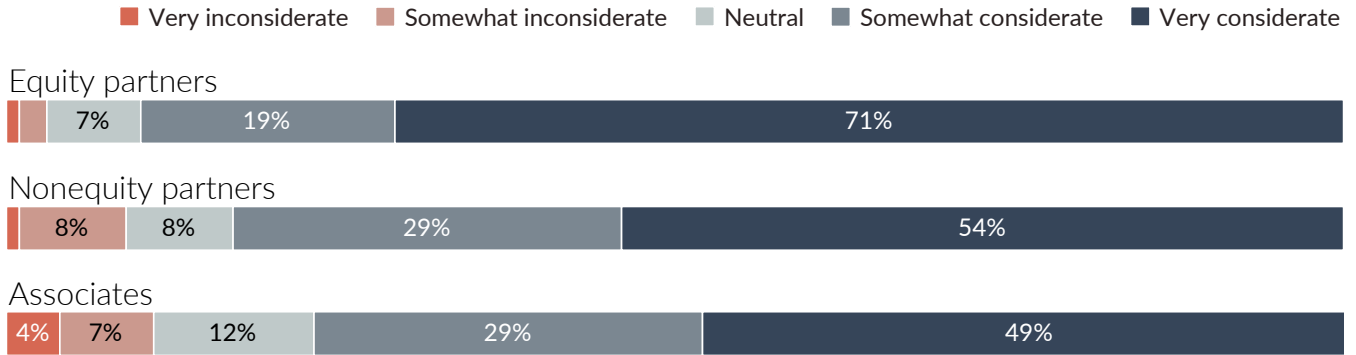
How satisfied are you with your firm's billable hour requirements?



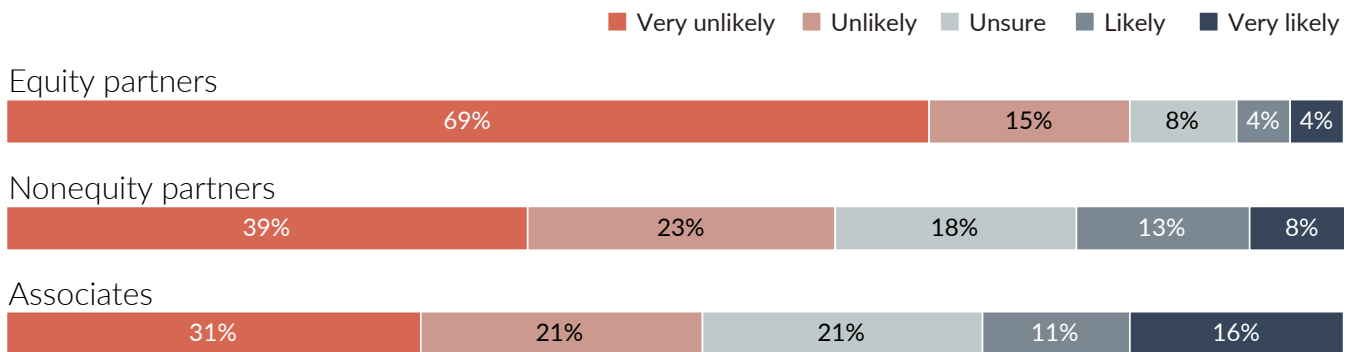
How satisfied are you with the opportunities for advancement at your firm?



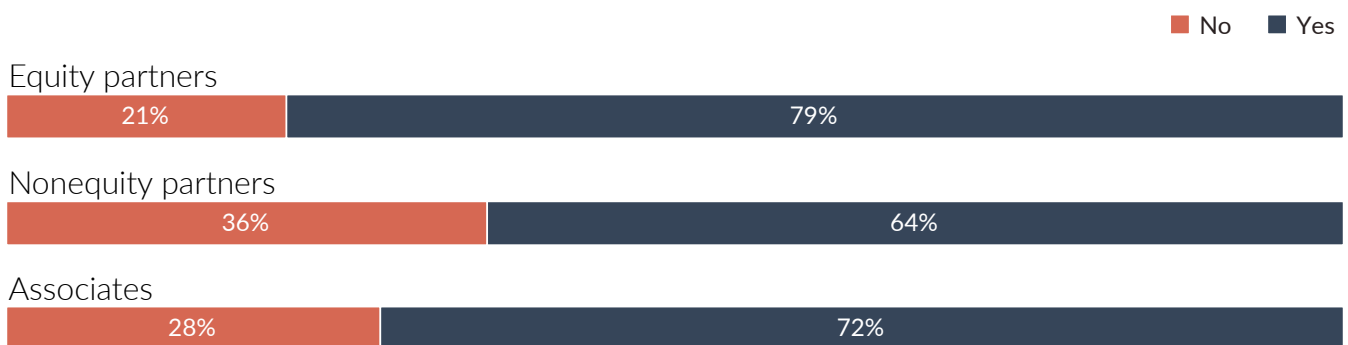
Is management at your firm considerate of family obligations?



How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?



If you could do it all over, would you still become a lawyer?



5. The Gender Gap

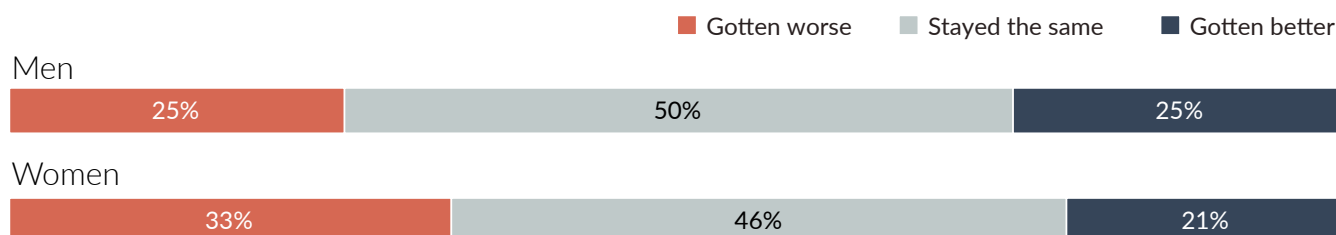
One persistent finding is that many of the same issues confronting junior attorneys also appeared when examining respondents by gender. This is because women were considerably more likely to be associates, with 43% of women in the sample identifying themselves as associates, compared with 29% of men.

A third of women said their work-life balance has gotten worse, compared to only a quarter of men, though this appears to

be mostly due to differences in seniority, as there is no clear difference among men and women at the associate level.

Men were more inclined than women to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs overall – 70% said so, compared to 62% of women – a distinction that disappears when looking only at male and female associates. Across all other satisfaction questions, there are minimal differences, even after taking into account seniority.

Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, gotten worse or stayed the same?



The likelihood of seeking a job with another firm in the next year reflects these satisfaction numbers, with 17% of men and 18% of women saying they are likely or very likely to do so. However, when looking at associates only, 30% of men and 24% of women were likely or very likely to seek a job at a different firm in the next year.

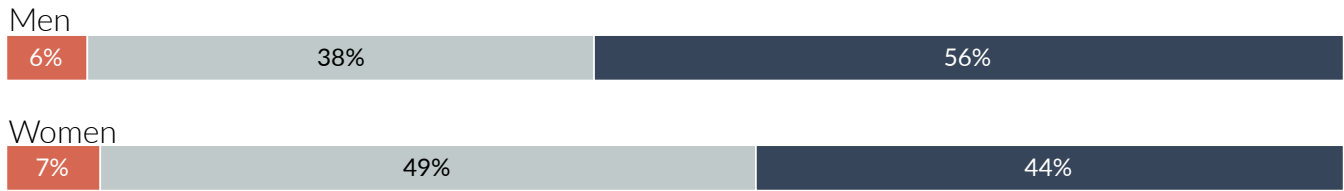
A majority of men – 56% – said their financial stability is “excellent,” compared with only 44% of women. This distinction is not only due to seniority, either, as

among only associates, 53% of women and 46% of men said their financial stability is “average.”

Women are also 18 percentage points more likely to carry student loan debt – 47%, compared to only 29% of men – which makes sense given their differing levels of seniority. But, digging deeper, even among associates there emerges a clear gender gap; 43% of male associates carry no student loan debt, compared to 28% of female associates.

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?

■ Poor ■ Average ■ Excellent



How much student loan debt do you have?

■ More than \$250,000 ■ \$100,001-\$250,000 ■ \$50,001-\$100,000 ■ \$1-\$50,000 ■ None

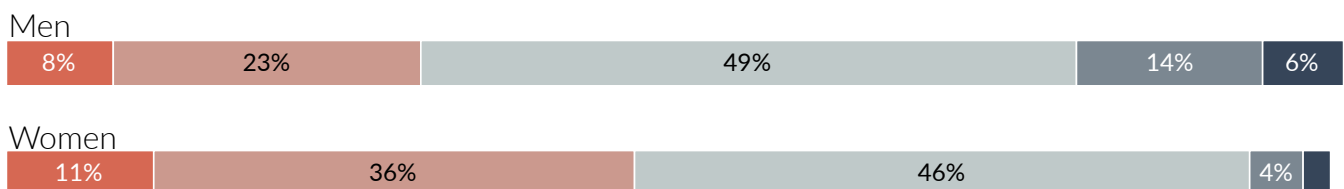


The results speak to differences in men and women’s experiences in critical areas like stress. Forty eight percent of women said they felt stressed most or all of the time, while only 32% of men said the same. This distinction persists when looking only at associates, as 47% of women and 39% of men at that level said they felt stressed most or all of the time.

While reports of gender discrimination are down among women – from 41% in 2023 to 29% in this year’s survey – 15% say they faced sexual harassment in the workplace, compared with 3% of men. The gender gap narrows a bit when looking only at associates, as 12% of female and 5% of male associates said they had experienced sexual harassment.

How stressed do you feel?

■ I feel stressed all of the time ■ I feel stressed most of the time ■ I sometimes feel stressed ■ I rarely feel stressed ■ I do not feel stressed





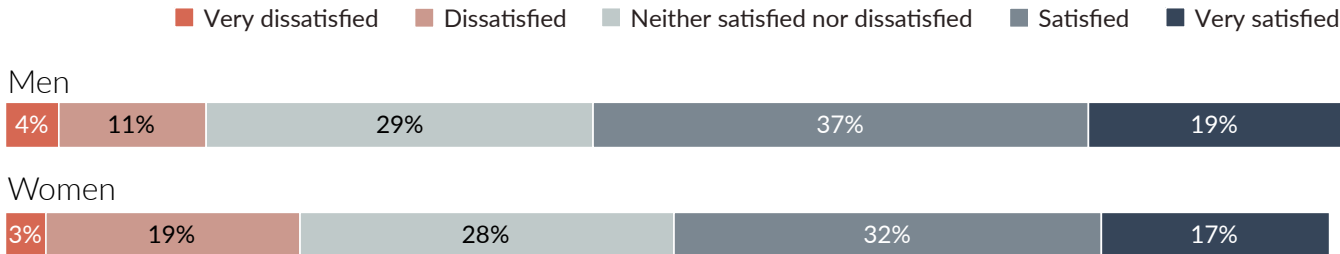
Women were also less inclined to agree or strongly agree that their workplaces are committed to diversity and inclusion. Sixty three percent of women did so, compared to 70% of men. When looking only at associates, the gap widens: 58% of female associates and 68% of male associates agreed or strongly agreed.

Echoing some of the findings from the 2024 Law360 Pulse AI Survey, women in our Law Firm Satisfaction survey were also somewhat less impressed with their firms' investments in artificial intelligence and technology, as less than half of women – 49% – said they were satisfied or very

satisfied, compared to 57% of men.

Despite these differences, women were as enthusiastic as men about lawyering as a career choice, with a resounding 73% of each group saying they would become attorneys again if given the chance to choose another profession. Their response fits well with existing data on law school admissions and incoming associate classes, where women are outnumbering men in many cases. In fact, among junior attorneys, women expressed less regret than men about their career choices: 75% of female associates and 69% of male associates would choose to be a lawyer again if given the chance.

How satisfied are you with your firm's investment in technology, including artificial intelligence?



6. Attorneys of Color

Attorneys of color in our sample were also considerably more likely to be at the associate level and were also more likely to be women. In fact, half of attorneys of color reported being at the associate level, compared to just under a third of white attorneys. Thirty-two percent of attorneys of color held partnerships at either the equity or nonequity levels, compared to 49% of white attorneys. It is difficult to disentangle the relationships between race, gender and seniority, though, as 55% of people of color were women, compared to only 39% of white respondents.

The rank differences persist across finances, with attorneys of color more likely than white attorneys to rate their financial stability as

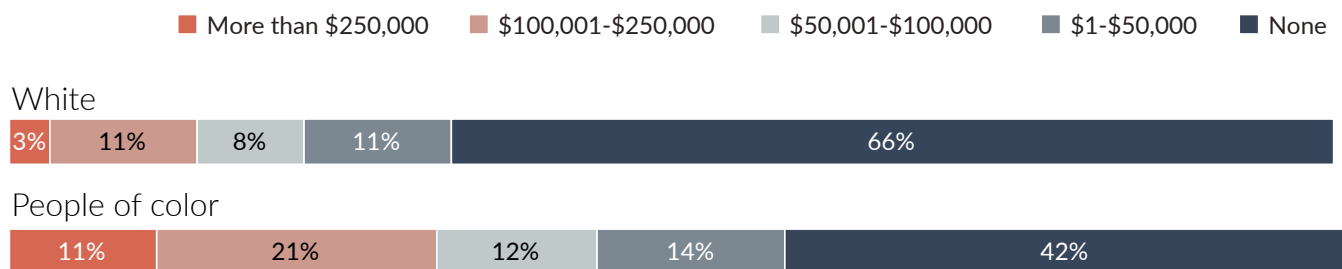
“average” – 54% to 41%, respectively – more likely to carry student loan debt – 58% to 34% – and more likely to say their work-life balance has stayed the same – 41% to 49% – or gotten worse – 34% to 28%.

There were no substantial differences across racial groups in levels of overall job satisfaction, with 64% of attorneys of color reporting they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied,” compared with 67% of white attorneys. A majority both of attorneys of color and of white attorneys reported they were at least satisfied with their compensation – 56% to 60%, respectively – opportunities for advancement – 60% to 63% – and billable hours requirements – 53% to 61%.

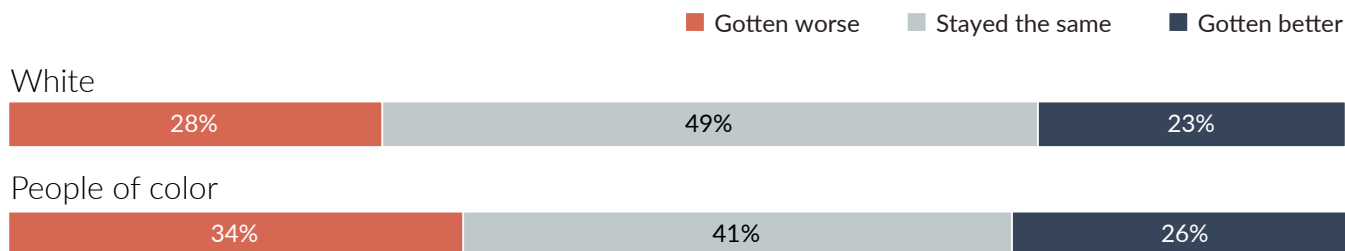
Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?



How much student loan debt do you have?



Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, gotten worse or stayed the same?



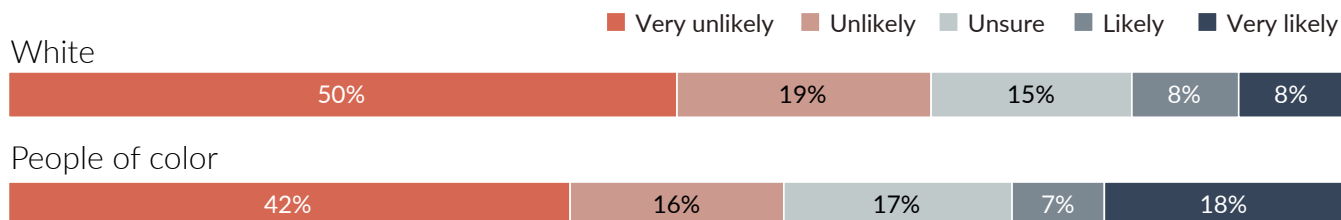
Law firms have historically had difficulty retaining attorneys of color, and a higher proportion said they are likely or very likely to look for a job at another firm. When asked, 25% of attorneys of color said they were likely or very likely to do so in the next year, compared to only 16% of white attorneys.

The racial differences in career plans persist even when examining associates only. Thirty-seven percent of associates of color – compared to only 25% of white associates – say they are likely or very likely to seek a new job in the next year.

It is significant, given the relatively high levels of satisfaction with most areas, that fully 20% of attorneys of color reported experiencing racial discrimination on the job, a number that rises to 24% when looking only at associates.

Despite these differences, however, white attorneys and attorneys of color were roughly equally satisfied with their career choices: 72% of attorneys of color and 73% of white attorneys would become lawyers again if given a second chance.

How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?



Meet the Team



Jack Collens
Senior Data Analyst



Sam Bell
Data Analyst



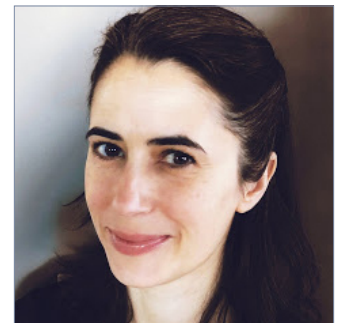
John Campbell
Senior Data Editor



Pamela Wilkinson
Features Editor



Chris Yates
Art Director



Jacqueline Bell
Director of Series,
Surveys & Data

Questionnaire

Are you based in the U.S.?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes you:

- Associate at a private firm
- Nonequity partner at a private firm
- Equity partner at a private firm
- Of counsel at a private firm
- In-house counsel
- Government attorney
- Staff attorney
- Nonattorney law firm staff
- Other (please specify)

What firm do you work for?

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?

- Poor
- Average
- Excellent

How much student loan debt do you have?

- None
- \$1-\$50,000
- \$50,001-\$100,000
- \$100,001-\$250,000
- More than \$250,000

Over the past year, has your work-life balance become better, worse, or stayed the same?

- Better
- Worse
- Stayed the same

How satisfied are you with your compensation?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with your firm's billable hour requirements?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Please rate your level of satisfaction with how well your firm utilizes the following economic levers: (1= Very dissatisfied, 5= Very satisfied)

Select one for each option

- Rates
- Hours
- Costs
- Leverage (the ratio of equity partners to all other lawyers in a firm)
- Realization (net effect of write-downs and write-offs)

How satisfied are you with your firm's investment in technology, including artificial intelligence?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with the opportunities for advancement at your firm?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with the collegiality and collaborative nature of your firm?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with the parental leave policy of your firm?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

What best describes you?

- I do not feel stressed
- I rarely feel stressed
- I sometimes feel stressed
- I feel stressed most of the time
- I feel stressed all of the time

How satisfied are you with your job?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Based on their reputation in the industry, if you could work at any law firm(s) other than the one where you currently work, which one(s) would you choose?

Select up to three

How many hours a week do you work, on average?

- Less than 40
- 40-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71-80
- More than 80

How much vacation time do you expect to take overall in 2024?

- Less than a week
- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- 3 weeks
- 4 weeks or more

How flexible is your firm with working remotely?

- Not flexible: I'm required to be in the office when possible.
- Somewhat flexible: I'm required to be in the office some days, but not always.
- Very flexible: I can be in the office, or not — it's my prerogative.

Have you ever personally encountered any of the following on the job?

Check all that apply

- Sexual harassment
- Gender discrimination
- Racial discrimination
- Age discrimination
- None of the above

How well did the firm deal with the incident(s)?

- Very poorly
- Poorly
- Acceptably
- Well
- Very well
- Not applicable

My workplace is committed to diversity and inclusion.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Is management at your firm considerate of family obligations?

- Very considerate
- Somewhat considerate
- Neutral
- Somewhat inconsiderate
- Very inconsiderate

Has your firm undergone a merger or acquisition over the past year?

- Yes
- No

If so, how satisfied are you with how the firm handled the integration?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How many pro bono hours did you work in 2023?

- 0 to 20 hours
- 21 to 40 hours
- 41 to 60 hours
- 61 to 80 hours
- More than 80 hours

If you could do it all over, would you still become a lawyer?

- Yes
- No

What is a common misconception about being a lawyer or the business of law?

What is the best part of being a lawyer?

Please provide any advice and tips for the newer lawyer.

How many attorneys are at your firm globally?

- 100 or fewer
- 101-200
- 201-300
- 301-400
- 401-500
- 501-600
- 601-700
- 701-1,000
- More than 1,000

How old are you?

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90+

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Nonbinary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

Which best describes your race or ethnicity?

- White (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Two or More Races (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Prefer not to identify

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